

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO
The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home

**Human Services Public Hearing
March 10, 2022**

SB 287 AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID

HB 5334 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

HB 5338 AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASING THE RATE OF MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT FOR HOME CARE SERVICES

HB 5339 AN ACT EXPANDING ACCESS TO THE CONNECTICUT HOME-CARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. I am also an RN with nearly 40 years' experience.

The CT Association for Healthcare at Home is the united voice for our licensed home health and hospice agencies as well as several non-medical Homemaker-Companion Agencies. Together, our members provide services that foster cost-effective home care for Connecticut's Medicaid population in the setting they prefer most – their own homes.

I'm testifying before you today to **support SB 287, HB 5334, HB 5339 and most importantly HB 5338 AAC Increasing the Rate of Medicaid Reimbursement for Home Care Services.**

All of these bills support the need for sufficient programs and healthcare workers to allow our CT Medicaid beneficiaries to receive the necessary support services for them to age in place. Exactly what we, as home and community-based providers, want to see and support. However, whether we do studies to predict future needed services or we expand access to the CT Home Care Program for Elders, we **must** begin by stabilizing and growing the healthcare workforce to care for this vulnerable population.

If we don't have an adequate workforce, we cannot expand services. Currently, we are in a crisis and are turning away referred cases daily due to lack of enough staff. We are also losing Home Health Aide, PCA, Homemaker and Companion level staff to jobs in retail who pay more and offer more benefits.

A good start to investing in our workforce comes from the ARPA HCBS funding still not fully approved and implemented. A next step would be to consistently address rates over time by increasing rates using a formula such as alignment with the National CPI. HB 5338 proposes increases to Medicaid rates using the national CPI; however, this bill is too limiting as it addresses only the CT Home Care Program for Elders rates and does not include the traditional medical, non-waiver home health care rates. It is also for one year only.

Unfortunately, this bill as written promotes disparities and silos, a recipe for failure. This happened recently when the Pediatric (Ages 0-18) Complex Care rates were increased by 31.7% while the Adult



(Ages 19 and up) rates only increased by 4.5%. Now home health agencies are being faced with balancing a nursing workforce that gets paid more to care for the pediatric cases than the adult cases when, oftentimes, the adult cases require more intense care.

We urge Human Services to make amendments to HB 5338 to include all agency-based Medicaid rates (both the waivers and the traditional medical home health rates) and to make the rate increases annual not one-time. This will help to level set the services and the ability to get staff to cover them. Please also fix the Pediatric and Adult Complex Care gap before we have Adult complex care cases without services forcing them to seek higher cost care outside the home.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before this vital committee.

Tracy Wodatch

203-774-4940

wodatch@cthealthcareathome.org